

**MEETING SUMMARY #3
WSF COMMUNITY MEETING
MCMURRAY MIDDLE SCHOOL, VASHON ISLAND, WA
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2009 6:30 – 8:30 P.M.**

Note: This meeting summary represents notes from the Washington State Department of Transportation Ferries Division (WSF) Community Meeting, and is not a formal transcript or minutes. It is provided as a record for the staff and public in attendance, and other interested parties.

Welcome and Introductions

WSDOT Assistant Secretary David H. Moseley

David welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. He introduced his WSF staff members as well as several Ferry Advisory Committee (FAC) members who were in attendance, then briefly went over the agenda and noted that there would be time for public comment at the end of the meeting.

Route & Community Specific Issues

WSDOT Assistant Secretary David H. Moseley

The first route-specific topic David discussed was the Vashon dolphin construction. The project involves replacing two old creosoted timber dolphins with five new steel dolphins. The work is ongoing, and the two-week closure of slip 1 will continue through November 15th. This does involve some temporary schedule adjustments which are slight during the week and more extensive on the weekends. The closure will affect eastbound weekend travel the most. The work is going well, with the contractor being able to use the vibratory pile driving method rather than the louder and more environmentally impactful pile hammer. The slip is expected to reopen by the scheduled date of November 16th. We appreciate the community's patience with the schedule modifications; if we had not been able to close the slip for 2 weeks it would have cost \$750,000 - \$1,000,000 more to do the work.

The next route-specific issue that David discussed was the transition of the Vashon / Seattle passenger-only ferry service from WSF to King County. King County took over at the end of September and now has complete control of the passenger-only service. The boat they are using holds about 146 passengers versus the 250 passenger boat that WSF used. To compensate for that they have three runs in the morning and three in the afternoon compared to the two morning and two afternoon runs that WSF provided. This change has created some scheduling complications for our Southworth passengers; we received

some customer feedback and have made some modifications to our schedule to allow for better meshing of the two service schedules. King County has adjusted as well to sync up with our schedule better. We have not heard any further complaints from customers so we believe that issue has been resolved.

The next route-specific issue that David discussed was the crew endurance changes. We have been able to use touring watches on a number of routes over the years. A touring watch involves the staff coming on the boat to work 8 hours, staying on the boat and resting for 8 hours, then working another 8 hours. This means the crews were working 16 hours within a 24 hour period. The Coast Guard became concerned because standard Maritime practice is no more than 12 hours worked in a 24 hour period. We received a directive from the Coast Guard that initially said no more touring watches would be allowed after September of 2009. We appealed and requested a variance in order to maintain touring watches in the San Juans. Without touring watches there would be no boats tied up in Friday Harbor overnight, which means no emergency exit off of the island is available. The Coast Guard allowed us to continue touring watches on the two boats that tie up at Friday Harbor with new regulations in place about staff rest time. The touring watches are gone everywhere else and they will not be coming back. One way we were able to mitigate the resulting difficulties was to work with our employees' bargaining units to establish 10 hour shifts at straight time. We have a number of the 4 tens in the fall and winter schedule; it doesn't solve the problem but it helps. Part of our ability to adjust the winter schedule is based on those ten hour shifts. We need to work with these new regulations; we know that the crews loved the touring watches and hated to see them go because the ten hour shifts are harder on them. However we have to adjust to reality, and we will be keeping a close eye on the crews that are still doing touring watches to make sure their fatigue levels are dropping.

Clarifying Questions from Audience

1. Are the dolphins in slip 1 going to eventually undergo the same process?
We are taking out all the existing wooden dolphins and replacing them with steel. They are working on both slips even though only one is closed.
2. We are glad you're taking those nasty creosoted things away.
So are we.
3. Not having to carry the cost of the passenger-only boats should change the economics of the north run.
We were being reimbursed by King County.
We were losing a lot and a big share of that was the passenger-only. This should help.
Yes.

New Vessel Program

WSDOT Assistant Secretary David H. Moseley

David discussed the construction of the new ferry at Todd Shipyard. We are currently undergoing construction of the first 64-car ferry. The project is on time and on budget; it is looking like a boat at this point rather than a bunch of pieces of steel. We have monthly meetings with Todd Shipyard which are very informative. It will be completed by the end of June next year, and then there will be testing and sea trials for 4-6 weeks. We expect the new vessel to be in service on the Port Townsend / Keystone run in August of 2010. This is our first new boat in 10-12 years and we are very pleased. We recently had a bid opening for 2 more 64-car ferries with an option for a third. The bid came in much better than the first bid, so even though there was only one bidder again, there was still a significant savings. We issued the Notice to Proceed today, so Todd has 540 days from today to complete the 2nd boat. They may beat that milestone by a couple of weeks because the engineering work is the same. Then the 3rd boat is due to be complete in January of 2012; that boat will replace the Rhody on the Point Defiance / Tahlequah route.

Clarifying Questions from Audience

1. How many cars did the Steel Electrics hold?
The Klickitat held about 64 cars. The other three all held about 59 cars because the elevator shafts took away some car spaces.
2. Will the new boats be more fuel efficient?
Yes, especially compared to the steel electrics. We are also actively looking for alternate fuels. Fuel is our largest cost other than labor, so we are aggressively looking for cleaner and less expensive fuel options. We have run some tests using biodiesel; the first test caused clogging but the second test which was with 20% bio-fuel worked better.
3. It's a shame that we will not have a chance to see the first 64-car boat perform before we move forward with the next two.
This boat is modeled after the Island Home boats which are in operation in Massachusetts. We have changed the design slightly, but it is the same core design. This is not a theoretical boat.
4. Will they be variable or fixed pitch?
The first one is fixed and the next two are variable pitch.
5. Are you pretty happy with your engineering and architectural staff?
Yes.

Vehicle Reservations Pre-Design Study

WSDOT Assistant Secretary David H. Moseley, WSF Operations and Project Manager Doug Schlieff

Vashon Island Community Meeting Summary

11/9/09

Page 3 of 7

David introduced Doug as the project manager for the study. Doug has been with WSF for more than 30 years and is a daily ferry commuter. He brings a lot of knowledge to the table. We wanted someone involved in this study that uses the ferries everyday and can ask the question: how would that work for me? Before I hand it over to Doug I want to clarify what exactly the Legislature has directed us to do. They have directed us to conduct a pre-design study of what a reservations system would look like. What would the IT / back office technology have to be to serve the needs of our customers? What business rules would need to be in place to make the system work well and be flexible? I want to be clear - the Legislature has not authorized us to implement reservations anywhere. They want to see the pre-design report to understand how reservations would work, and to make sure that it would be helpful to customers rather than an inconvenience. This is only worth doing if it can help our customers as well as help us spread our demand better.

Doug continued the discussion by explaining some of the reasons for reservations. Most have heard about the steel electrics being pulled from service. That event combined with the fact that our entire fleet is aging has led to all of the funding being directed toward building new boats. There is no funding for terminal expansion. There are congestion issues at our terminals, and because of the financial situation that the state is in we have had to identify some strategies that will allow us to better use the space that we have without expanding any of our facilities. A reservation system may be one way to mitigate some of the demand, reduce wait times, and cut down on the amount of vehicles idling at the tollbooths. It was identified in our Long Range Plan and the Legislature directed us to take a closer look at this possibility. If we were able to take the line at the tollbooth and turn it into a list of reserved cars, we could try to push the demand out to underutilized trips. If we are able to provide our customers with certainty about the boat they will be able to get on, so they can just come down and get on the boat, we may be able to attract more users by offering that service. By doing this we are trying to avoid having to expand our existing terminals.

The Legislature wants to know how this would work, what terminal processing enhancements we would need, the costs/benefits/risks, and the IT back office needs. As we go through the pre-design study, our first goal is to not limit our users' abilities to travel. Also, the system has to be easy to use and flexible. We want to improve our ferry communities' environments and mitigate expensive terminal construction. We sent out a Request for Information to the industry to determine what types of reservation programs are available off the shelf. We received six responses that were very useful, and helped us to see some

features that our customers might like. We also contacted more than a dozen ferry systems around the world that use reservations, including some in England and Istanbul, Turkey. I personally visited BC Ferries, which has a very successful reservations system. There are many similarities between our system and these other systems, but also many differences. We have benefited from learning about what has worked and not worked for these other systems.

We have also split up into work groups to pursue a variety of topics, one of which is the business rules that would need to be in place to accomplish our goals. We need these rules to be able to spread our demand better, but also to protect all of our different types of users. We needed to apply this study to a specific route, and we chose Edmonds / Kingston, which has turned out to be a great choice. It is a challenging route, which has all the different user types and also carries the most cars in our entire system. We formed a partnership group in July made up of a variety of users from both sides of that route, and we have been meeting to discuss the proposed system. They have been very constructive, asking lots of great questions, and we appreciate the time they have put in.

Next we are expected to present the draft pre-design report to the Legislature on December 15th. We have two more partnership meetings before then and lots of work to do. It is a huge task to bring together all of what we have learned. We envision that after the document is finalized, every route will be slightly different, and the pre-design report won't cover every characteristic of every route. We don't know what the future holds, we don't know if this will be implemented on some routes and not others; it may not be a one size fits all system.

Clarifying Questions from Audience

1. Will you make it route specific for the triangle? I don't care how it works elsewhere; I worry about Fauntleroy because it's totally unique. I'm skeptical.
You're not alone in your skepticism. Every route will have its own set of issues that will involve some tailoring.
2. If the Legislature decides they like this idea and says to go forward, would it be everywhere, like an all or nothing thing?
No, in my opinion we would first upgrade our existing reservations systems. They are old and need to be replaced. We would then watch and see how that works, and make any changes that are needed. It's conceivable that the Legislature could come out and say that they only want reservations on particular routes and not others. They could say everywhere except the triangle. There is no guarantee that we will implement reservations everywhere. It may not work on the triangle route;

Fauntleroy and Vashon have such small docks, and then there is the issue with have multiple destinations. It's a very difficult route to tackle.

3. Why don't you ask the Legislature to widen the dock by twenty feet, then they can give us reservations.

That defeats the purpose of having reservations. I can assure you that we are a long way from having that discussion for the triangle. We have to prove that it can work first. You may end up wanting reservations if we can show that it works very well.

4. How will the reserved space be dispersed between each type of user? Will there be a certain percentage for each type?

That's exactly right. We will give priority access to frequent users, give some space to commercial interests, and hold some for the infrequent user. We will also always leave room for drive-ups and have space for emergency vehicles and carpools.

5. There's no room here to separate various users without significant modifications.

If we can't do reservations without expanding the dock, then we probably won't do it. Edmonds is larger than Fauntleroy, but not by much. We are working on this problem.

Preparing for the 2010 Legislative Session

WSDOT Assistant Secretary David H. Moseley

David discussed the upcoming 2010 Legislative session. As you know WSF was front and center during the 2009 Legislative session, with Plan B in the spotlight. We don't anticipate that same attention in the 2010 session. There are some important things they have asked to see; the reservations pre-design study is one of those. Also they want to see a new accident and incident investigation policy, fuel conservation targets, and information regarding a fuel surcharge in case gas prices spike again. Those are some issues that will be discussed; these are reports on things that the Legislature has asked us to look at, but they are not hot-button issues like the Long-Range Plan last year and the vessel and terminal issues. The JTC (Joint Transportation Committee) is doing a study on alternative funding options for transportation, because the gas tax is dropping as cars become more fuel efficient. In 2016 there is a one billion dollar gap in funding for the ferry system, and we need to fill that gap. That discussion will be occurring more in the 2011 session, but we need to be ready and at the table for those discussions. If there is a comprehensive transportation package for the Legislature to consider we need to be a part of it.

Clarifying Questions from Audience

1. Will there be some conversation about funding for the 144-car boats?

Vashon Island Community Meeting Summary

11/9/09

Page 6 of 7

I doubt it. That will be part of the 2011 session. We will get the 64-car boats done and then work on the 144s.

Public Comments & Questions

1. How much control do you have over the interface between the ferries and the buses? The 118 shuttle from Fauntleroy pretty much duplicates the passenger-only service, and I would be more inclined to walk on to your ferry if I didn't have to wait 30 minutes for the bus at the other end.
We don't have much control when it comes to Metro. We are only 2-3% of their ridership, so it is hard to get Metro to focus on our transit connections so our riders can get off the boat and right onto a bus. We are a much larger part of other bus systems, like Community Transit, Island Transit and Kitsap Transit. Those buses will be lined up at the terminals for our riders; some will even wait if the boats are late. We don't have that with Metro, and I have not been able to figure out how to engage them in that conversation. I had the idea of a circulating bus between the Colman dock in Seattle and the King Street station, to help encourage people to walk on instead of driving into the city. That idea has gone nowhere. We have been struggling with this for some time, but if you give us the exact times we may be able to fix it.
2. Thank you for your time, we really appreciate this.

Conclusion

David thanked everyone for coming. Meeting was adjourned.